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*A MAY-DAY WALK*

*“The woodland melodies are sweet, but sweeter far is her girlish  
laughter as the fragrant wind plays havoc with her hair”*

*—Page 54*

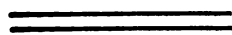
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*The* ISLE OF CONTENT

&

*Other Waifs of Thought*

BY GEORGE F. BUTLER, M.D.

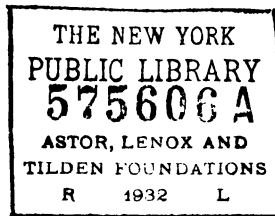


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**TO  
MY DAUGHTER  
MARY ASENATH BUTLER  
THIS BOOK  
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED**



## P R E F A C E

From the numerous essays I have contributed to *The Medical Standard*, of which I was formerly editor, *The Optimist*, *The Erudite*, *The Rubric*, and my own periodical *Doctors' Magazine and How to Live*, my daughter has selected a few which in her opinion are worthy of publication in book form.

Because of my regard for her, therefore, **THE ISLE OF CONTENT** is offered to the public with the hope that the reader will experience as much pleasure in the perusal of these "Reflections" as I found in writing them.

G. F. B.

Alma, Mich., September 1, 1902.



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# THE ISLE OF CONTENT

*A Fantasy*





# THE ISLE OF CONTENT

## *A Fantasy*

**T**HEY met at the sea of desire. He, from the land of cloud and snow. She, from the region of sun and flowers. They looked into each other's eyes and a subtle sweetness filled their lives. They touched one another's hands and forgot the past. He drew her to him and they swayed and swooned in an agony of passionate emotion. Stooping he kissed the lipping lips while her fragrant breath sank into his veins like the heavy perfume of Chilean jasmine.

Their passion-laden blood hissed through their famished hearts until they were oblivious alike to the scorn of men and the wrath of God.

"Why return to a discontented existence?" said he, "Love is all. Come with me to the Isle of Content, where we may enjoy a lifetime of love."

And in a voice softer than the musky air she replied:

"I will."

So trembling with rapture, intoxicated with heavenly anticipation, they sailed away on the sapphire sea.

The languorous stillness was broken only by the rippling melody of the enticing waves.

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## The Isle of Content

Trailing their hands in the liquid blue they caught the seaweed in their pulsing fingers, while the warm air, impregnated with voluptuously soliciting perfume, caressed their cheeks, thrilling them with sensuous emotions.

The sky, drowsy with heat, lulled them into delightful languor.

Beautiful fishes chased each other, parting the water with their beating fins. Strange birds with exquisite plumage alighting on the sail drowned their souls in melody divine.

They drifted on and on, till the horizon was tinged with the sunset's tawny gold. The cloudless night brooded over them while the light from the palpitating stars studded the waves with sparkling gems.

The moon rose mellow from the rippling sea ere they landed.

Her dark tresses loosely strewn, warm and fragrant, fanned his face, as raining kisses upon her burning lips, he led her up the undulating turf.

"Here, we shall live," she gasped, "contented in our love."

The Island welcomed them in low voluptuous tones. To the grove of Daphne they wandered ;

## The Isle of Content

and there on the swelling earth they rested in an ecstasy of joy. The sighing branches whispered in lying cadences of content and undying love.

The delicious perfume of the flowers and the ripening fruit was wafted to them in luscious suggestiveness. It filtered into their blood like the fabled Lethe, and they slumbered sweetly and peacefully.

The sounds of birds and beasts grew more subdued. The moaning wind died away till at last the Island lay in a delicious quiet, hot and odorous. And still they slept. But that night the lotus bloomed for them—and withered.

\* \* \* \*

In the center of a rippleless sea is an Island, breathless, treeless and lifeless. No bird wheels above in the hot sky. No beast howls from the burning sands. Nothing but the solemnity of death and the austerity of utter desolation. Yet it is said that once the Island was buried in a dense and aromatic foliage, fragrant with flowers and musical with the songs of birds. But one day the sun stopped in midheaven, and, resting like a mass of molten brass, poured its rays like hot streams of blood upon everything beneath. For centuries this sickening

## The Isle of Content

monotony of heat and glare lapped up the life of every living thing, until now it is a sepulchre where silence reigns forever.

In the hot waters the wrecks of a man and a woman paddle with their shriveled and blistered hands a boat, doomed for eternity to go round and round the Island in the unrelenting sun. They cursed each other long ago, but now they do not speak. His face with parched tongue and staring eyes is ever turned toward the north — the land of cloud and snow. She, withered from a likeness of aught human, looks forever with frantic and infinite longing to the south — the region of sun and flowers.

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# **ROSES AND THORNS**



## ROSES AND THORNS

“**E**VERY rose has its thorns; would that the thorns did not outlive the rose!” says Jean Paul Richter. Yet even thorns are designed by Nature to protect her offspring, and as they guard from injury or spoliation the plants they beset, so in the spiritual life sin and sorrow may be ordained for higher purposes than blind mortality can discover. Surely there is no more sacred attitude of the soul than contrition, which implies infringement of moral law, nor is aught more softening and pathetic in experience than human grief, which implies a thousand regrets and anguish of tears. As vernal earth-throes rend the sod and “the great mother” smiles at last in violet and anemone, as though her pain were crowned with bliss, so unto mortals after the storm comes the sunlit calm; after asphodel and amaranth the soul’s serenity. Joy and sorrow are but relative, as light and shade, memory and oblivion. Like the rose and the thorn they are borne upon the same stem and complement each other. It is in vain to contend with fate. We are not permitted to look within the veil that shrouds from mortal sight the mystery of the unknown. Faith and philosophy can but declare our limitations — they are powerless to



## Roses and Thorns

transcend the environment of time and circumstance.

It is the prerogative of man to clothe with fond imagination the barren facts of experience. Dwelling in a beautiful world for a space 'twixt two eternities, his reason grasps the full significance of human life, yet is not dismayed ; his heart responds to every whisper of the good and evil divinities that journey beside him, and still he knows that in the subtle sphere of his noblest activity he is perfectly alone.

Earth-born in his passions, God-like in his zeal, every moment of his brief pilgrimage is freighted with silent tragedy, every dream of happiness imbued with fruitless longing. No *deus ex machina* can rescue him from destiny—he must tread the wine-press befriended only by his inner hope and the pride of nature that inspires him with Promethean courage. He will not, he cannot yield, having forsworn despair ; and though all else forsake him, he will stoutly cleave unto his spirit-guide, his unconquerable trust that all will not end in gloom. And in his loving recollection the rose-leaves are embalmed ; the thorns may wound : they cannot take from the faded petals of life the charm of a remembered fragrance.

**SISTE, VIATOR**



## SISTE, VIATOR

“**E**VERY suicide is an awful poem of sorrow. Where will you find a work of genius floating above the seas of literature that can compare with this paragraph: ‘Yesterday, at four o’clock, a young woman threw herself into the Seine from the Pont des Arts.’” So meditates Balzac, sounding to its depths the infinite pathos of human existence. “Anywhere, anywhere out of the world” — but how intense must have been the mental suffering, and how keen the quivering anguish ere the fatal plunge was taken! In arguing that joy is the normal object of life it has been said that even the suicide pursues it, thinking to attain greater happiness in death. We commonly attribute self-destruction to momentary aberration of mind; yet there are instances in history where the craving for oblivion seems alike just and natural. What, for example, was there left for poor Lucrece, her chastity violated, her dream of life envenomed, and only the shadow of a stupendous sorrow before her? From the contemplation of so marked a future every instinct of her proud Roman spirit recoiled. It is hard to judge her noble despair.

We may not lift the veil which shrouds from curiosity the life and motives of the suicide. There

## Siste, Viator

are "thoughts that do lie too deep for tears" which cannot be readily comprehended, passages in the tragedy of mortal vicissitude to be interpreted only by those in whose hearts they are written, even with their own blood. There is something well-nigh sacred in the theme. For the living there is still some fitful gleam of light, some thought of glad expectancy: for one who stands upon the brink of voluntary destruction there is only appalling darkness and misery too deep for utterance. The sun once shone, the flowers bloomed, the birds sang and sounds of love thrilled the exultant spaces of earth and heaven. Now all is gone; the world is behind, bathed in serene loveliness while the shadows of eternity gather about a once joyous existence. It is the saddest, the deepest and most inscrutable moment possible to human experience.

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# THE DESERT AND THE ROSE



## THE DESERT AND THE ROSE

**W**HILE driving over a prairie in the far west I could but observe the many accidents which wrought upon the scene around me. Here lay a stretch of soft grass, one of Nature's untrimmed lawns, over which a gentle south wind crept, barely bending the blades as it passed on, and leaving no trace of its caress; here the devastating flames had left only a lifeless, blackened waste; here a heavy ox-team had worn deep furrows in the earth; and here lay the blighted path of a cyclone, while yonder the ground was rent by dark fissures of unknown depth, as by some Titanic convulsion of nature—perhaps a seismic shock. Meditating upon the varied influences impressed by man and the elements, it seemed to me that they typified the vicissitudes of human life. The whispering south-wind lightly touching the prairie grasses resembled the transient play of emotions in the soul—a moment's impression, scarcely recognized and gone forever; the sombre waste left by the devouring prairie fire marked some infinite loss, some solemn sorrow in



## The Desert and the Rose

whose fiery anguish the tenderest hopes of a human heart had been consumed ; the furrows in the trail, the wearing cares and deep anxieties which attend our earthly pilgrimage, and the cyclonic fury, the wrath, the struggle, and despair of mortal passion. The subtle analogies between the life of man and the phenomena of nature occurred to me as never before, and, like Swedenborg, I was moved by the mysteries of a spiritual symbolism, transfiguring the material world.

\* \* \* \*

Said the great Angelo musing over a block of marble : "Lo, I see an angel imprisoned here—I will release him." Out of the adamant of life is hewn the strongest character. It is delightful to rest on our oars and drift gently down the stream—an enchanted voyage, such as Shelley portrays in the marvelous close of "The Revolt of Islam," a glimpse of paradisaical loveliness and calm. The true test comes when we reach the ocean, struggle with the breakers, and pull for our lives. Or, to pursue another metaphor suggested by the sculp-

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## The Desert and the Rose

tor's thought, there are marble natures everywhere around us ; hearts grown cold with departed hope, or cruel disenchantment, or base betrayal, which await only the kindling touch of sympathy and loving insight to call into joyous being the angel in them. Long have their ardent yearnings led them o'er burning plowshares, 'til their feet are seared and they are very, very weary. Strike but a kindred chord, and the inner music of their lives responds with exultant harmony.

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# **THE DOCTRINAIRE**



## THE DOCTRINAIRE

**I**T is often difficult to surrender one's preconceived notions of men and events. From habit of mind one is wont to cling tenaciously to cherished theories and opinions. Yet he whose reason is open to conviction can at best view the world from a narrow and illiberal standpoint, the images of human experience being distorted, because seen through the refracting medium of his own consciousness. Nothing can be more unphilosophical than the isolated judgment of affairs. "If any one can convince me of an error," says Marcus Aurelius, "I shall be very glad to change my opinion; for truth is my business, and nobody was ever yet hurt by it." Many a Christian might profit by the lofty thought of the heathen philosopher.

The doctrinaire is ever a stumbling-block, both to himself and others. His mental strabismus precludes the possibility of considering matters in their true relations, and, sooner or later, downright prejudice, fatal to all truth, supplants honest, though intolerant, conviction. The man who is continually laying down the law is very apt to be smitten with

## The Doctrinaire

so inflated a conceit as to ignore the right of private opinion in others, thereby vitiating his own claim to independence of thought. The disenchantment comes to him when he discovers that an *ipse dixit* has no terror for thinking men, who, although waiving discussion, impress upon him, even by their silence, a withering dissent.

Dogmatism may appear to convince; yet it is the earmark of a shallow understanding. It thwarts congenial intercourse, chills the ardor of friendly feeling, and above all, tends to blight the spirit of "sweet reasonableness" upon which all finer relations among men so largely depend. Not that acquiescence or agreement of opinion should exist. "How mortifying is it," says Emerson, "to find in those from whom we expect a brave resistance, only a mush of concession!" Differences of thought are like positive and negative poles in electricity — they interact to produce the vital spark, either alone being inert. But the formula of the self-opinionated, "This *is* so" is the epitaph of conversation, often of friendship.

## The Dòctrinaire

Life is a gem cut by nature into many facets, each of which is opaque or lustrous according to the light in which it is viewed, the full beauty being revealed only by their collective radiance. The dogmatist, regarding but a single facet, and that from an angle, fails to detect the true significance of the cutting, and knows not the value of the treasure.

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# THE TICK OF THE CLOCK

*A Reverie of a Life*

## The Tick of the Clock

should be, but deeming himself a reason why world systems should be builded.

Tick, tick, tick, tick, through the ebb and flow of years, and he is grown to man's estate. The top, nor bat and ball, nor brook have little entertainment for him now. He holds a throbbing heart against his own, and seals with a holy kiss, love's compact, thus solving the riddle of the pessimist. Yet with each tick of the clock Death takes one step nearer to him and to the one of all the world he has wooed and won, but he heeds it not. Conscious of his power, he longs to brave the buffetings of life, and place upon his breast the badge of fame. Courted by flattery and brazen proffers of friendship; encouraged by factitious ties of wealth and place; of reputation and love of wife and child, he strides dauntless through the world with a buoyancy and independence that over-rides all doubts and dangers, as sea-waves break o'er sunken rocks.



Tick, tick, tick, tick, through sun and shade, and anxious days and sleepless nights, seeing himself stripped of his hoarded gold and the luxuries of

## The Tick of the Clock

life, discovering at last the dishonesty of those he once called friends ; learning that the world looks upon failure with indifference or abhorrence, and tolerates misfortune only to turn it to its own account for a selfish purpose, he at last finds himself bound for weary days and nights upon a bed of pain, babbling secrets that he had cherished long, believing that the whole world begins at his pillow and ends at the foot of his bed ; but tick, tick, and his bleared eyes look out upon a wider sphere. He sees his wife bending over him and feels her loving kiss pressing his weary eyelids down, while her soft hands cool the fever of weeks and charm the pain away. Once more hope and health are his. Resolutions again fill his grateful soul, and energy and courage, stimulated by his dependent loved ones, take him back into the war of life.



Tick, tick, tick, tick, and the shuttle of time weaves into the fabric of years the white threads of age. I see another divine picture, but it is the grace of love and age, of silence and of night. There are tears now, as then, but they are tears of sorrow, for a soul is going out of life. The nurse





## The Tick of the Clock

gravely moistens the lips of the helpless thing. The old man looks with startled eyes at those about him, and again reaches out his feeble hands. He shivers, and now, as then, craves only warmth and the tender touch of a woman's hand. Above the low sobs and the loving words of her whom he has worshipped and adored, and the relentless ticking of the clock, I hear the doctor sadly say, "He's all right now."

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*WHAT'S THE USE?*

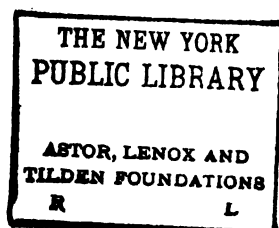








**WHAT'S THE USE?**



## WHAT'S THE USE?

I sit alone within my quiet room  
And gaze, O Skull! into thy soulless eyes,  
And mark the ghastly look on thy lean visage,  
While thoughts, like waves that roll from shore to shore,  
Sweep o'er my brain, and murmur to me things  
Far, far beyond my feeble mind to grasp —  
Until, impelled by some mysterious force,  
I fain would call thy spirit back again  
From the strange confines of its mystic home.  
Would thou couldst speak to me who toil on earth  
Unceasingly, groping for light to climb  
The tortuous path to honor, fame and wealth :  
Would thou couldst utter to my wondering soul  
The truth I seek, yet nevermore may find, —  
But what's the use?

Yes, dread memento of man's living state,  
No less than grewsome herald of his death,  
'Tis in the subtle sphere of thy omniscience  
To solve the mystery that shrouds my days,  
And flood my life with knowledge that shall shine  
Like morning splendors 'round my pilgrimage.  
Thine 'tis to rend the veil that hides from me  
The pathway I should follow — now I tread  
With trembling feet the labyrinthine ways  
Amid whose darkness fate has made me creep,  
And with only here and there a fitful gleam  
Of light enough to warn, but not to guide —  
Thinking that every turn must be the last  
That bars me from my heart's ambition :  
The blessed goal of all my tenderest hope,  
For I was fashioned in no passive mould,  
But dowered with human passions from my birth —

## What 's the Use ?

Fires that burned within me, thoughts that seethed  
Deep down in hidden crypts of my lone spirit,  
And urged to maddening impulse and dark deeds  
My quivering fancy shudders to recall.  
Oft have I wandered forth into the night,  
Communing with the lightnings and the storm —  
When rock and crag, like demons, seemed to shriek  
My name, and the shrill cataract laughed at me,  
As, like Orestes from the furies, swift  
I sped, not knowing whither, only mad,  
Mad with the frenzy of a pitiless doom.  
If life be sweet, as in our dreams it is,  
Why was this bitter mingled with the sweet ?  
Why in the paltry span of three-score-ten  
Must be confined all mortal happiness ?  
If bitter, why so long ? Why unto men  
Was erst decreed so dire a mockery  
Of bliss to bear — Pandora's precious gifts  
So wantonly disturbed, the good and ill  
Shaken pell-mell, as in a lottery urn —  
The only certain prize uncertainty.  
Tell me, O Skull ! thou oracle, that still  
Must be by lingering knowledge tenanted,  
Tell me these things and calm my feverish zeal —  
But what's the use ?

Flower and seed their purposes fulfill,  
Ripen and die, obeying nature's law :  
Yet man his mission oftentimes leaves unwrought,  
Perishes ere his time, and leaves his task  
Uncrowned by fair fruition. Every leaf  
And blade of grass is counted ere its birth,  
Rounding its humble life to free perfection —

## What 's the Use ?

Man knows not when a blight may intervene  
To chill the aspirations of the soul,  
And from his loving heart pours forth in vain  
Perchance the tenderest emotions ; honoreth truth  
Only to be deceived ; and leaves behind him  
Only a mournful memory. Tell me, thou  
Whose visions compass this sad destiny,  
Tell me, O Skull ! how on bright wings of hope  
I can attain the regions eternal  
Where peace doth reign, and happier thoughts abide !  
But what's the use ?

And tell me this, companion weird and mute,  
Why the sweet cherub eyes of innocence  
In death are closed, and sinful lives are spared  
To soil the world with their impurity ?  
Why, unto those who righteously pursue  
The path of wisdom, is the way obscured,  
And from the book of life its loveliest page  
By vandal fortune rent ? Tell me if thou,  
The past reviewing, dost regret the deeds  
That marked thy earthly sojourn, or lament  
The loss of that for which thy spirit yearned  
Through years of fruitless longing — if the guerdon  
Which fond imagination loves to frame  
Be worth the martyrdom. If all be false,  
Tell me, O Skull ! as thou wert under oath,  
The truth, whole truth, and nothing but the truth.  
If those our dreams are only mockery,  
Then what's the use ?

Thus musing, suddenly a voice I heard,  
Conjured from secret chambers, as it were



## What's the Use?

The lapping of dark waves in ocean cavern :  
A voice that filled my inmost soul with awe,  
So supernatural was its monotone.  
I looked around me and a shuddering sense  
Of an unearthly presence sealed my speech,  
And as I mused, with death-like prophecies  
Of some impending terror — lo, the Skull  
Grinned in the placid moonlight as it fell  
O'er ghastly contours, and, where once had beamed  
Eyes of clear lustre, warmed with living thought,  
Loomed the grim sockets as the spectre spake :  
"Great nature worketh wisely. Not in vain  
Did she create in joy from her deep bosom  
Air, water, flame, and myriad fruits of earth,  
But that her loving largesse might provide  
Meet habitation for the sons of men.  
Of wealth thou pulist, and ephemeral fame —  
That dies ere thou canst recognize its face :  
Know that the sweetest boon vouchsafed to man  
Is service unto others ; whosoever  
Shall give to drink, even to a little child,  
A cup of water only — so the Master  
Ordains the law of human charity.  
Earth is thy abode, and love thy mission ;  
'Tis idle to repine and waste thy brain  
In futile quest of knowledge which from thee,  
While the poor robe of clay remains thy vesture,  
Is wisely veiled. There's not a single hour  
That is not freighted with the power of good,  
And brings to thee blest opportunity  
To make thy journey richer far than gold  
Or vulgar baubles madly coveted.  
Life is made precious only by good deeds :

## What 's the Use ?

Thy wealth thou needst must leave behind the tomb.  
Thy kindness and the love of fellow-men  
Make thee God's almoner, and forevermore  
Shall dwell on earth, a fragrant memory ;  
Yet purblind as thou art, O mortal man,  
Thy brain is shriveled in the fires of doubt,  
And from thy soul comes the despairing cry :  
    "O, what's the use ?"

The voice grew fainter, and, as in a dream,  
I pondered long the solemn oracle.  
Still, as the moonlight calmly o'er me streamed,  
Soothing my mind with pensive melancholy,  
I could but hear the echo of that sigh,  
Borne on the wings of subtle fantasy :  
    "But what's the use ?"

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# **A MAY-DAY WALK**



## A MAY-DAY WALK

“Shine ! Shine ! Shine !

Pour down your warmth, great sun !

While we bask, we two together.”

— *Walt Whitman*

**W**E two, my daughter and I, strode out today into the glorious sunshine of a closing Spring. In a week it will be June; “Oh, calm June days that overflow the night, and brief June nights that yield another day!” The grass has grown luxuriantly in the fields and the roadsides. The fruit trees were late in blossoming this year, and through the vista before us, we see blending with the green the million apple blossoms, some white, some tinted like the rose of an evening sky.

Standing in the sunlight, by the roadside, we are still and hesitate, for the soft wind brings to our listening ears alluring messages. The woods by the river solicit us, and the music of the water joins in melodious invitation. The birds in the old orchard call us in notes almost divine, and we are tempted to climb the fence and wander among those gnarled and moss-grown trees, which, during many succeeding years, have shown but little change, save the soft renewing transmutation of decay. But the restless river and the whispering

## A May-Day Walk

forest lure us from the pregnant orchard, and so with Mary's hand in mine we walk across the undulating green of the meadow into the woodland's shade. The bell of the distant village church adds a faint rythm to the breeze as it mingles with the low *Te Deum* of the pines, "making a cathedral of immensity for the everlasting worship without words."

Then as the last faint echoes of that inarticulate psalm die away on the morning air we are charmed into meditative silence by the sibylline undertones of the woods.

Inhaling deep breaths of the Sabbath solitude, I silently thank God for this glorious May day and wonder how a man can be impatient when he can see, and hear, and smell what Nature gives us. There are sermons in the lichened rocks and tongues in the trees and the rippling, eddying water which seem to say to me: "Be patient! You have an eternity before you and an eternity behind you." Patience is a great virtue, but how seldom we welcome it. It was a lesson to me to observe the magnitude of the pines, and read the wrinkles of the gnarly oak against which Mary was leaning in unstudied repose. A robin calls to his mate and I look away, gaze on across the fields and down the

## A May-Day Walk

road to the village, but there is no one in sight. My patients in the Sanitarium are sitting idly in the parlors or lounging still in bed. How many of their aches and pains, their "blues" and introspective moods would disappear if they would get out into the cheery sunshine of this charming May morning, fresh, sweet, and bright, the soft air ringing with the songs of birds, and fragrant with flowers, that cover bank and slope, woody nooks and secret dells of the contented earth; tender clouds, islanding the blue heaven; and the gracious sunshine upon all—pure and serene, and hopeful, as only Spring sunshine ever is, and I am reminded of Herrick's poem:

"Get up, get up, for shame, the blooming morn  
Upon her wings presents the God unshorne.  
See how Aurora throws her faire  
Fresh-quilted colors through the aire;  
Get up, sweet slug-abed, and see  
The dew be-spangling herbe and tree  
Each flower has wept and bowed toward the east  
About an hour since, yet you're not drest,  
Nay, not so much as out of bed  
When all the birds have mattenyns seyed,  
And sung their thankful hymns; 'tis sin,  
Nay profanation to keep in,  
When as a thousand virgins on this day,  
Spring sooner than the lark, to fetch in May."



## A May-Day Walk

I look back to Mary who has stepped out on the river's sunlit bank, and I thank God again for that pure face, fairer than any flower that blooms in May. The woodland melodies are sweet, but sweeter far is her girlish laughter as the fragrant wind plays havoc with her hair. God bless her! May she always be as pure as the apple blossoms on yonder hill that are as stainless as unfallen snow, and as happy as the birds singing above us this Spring morning. But methinks I can detect in her young heart a hint of Summer, and I know that with the Summer will come the roses — and the thorns — but God grant her womanhood may be for her but as the “‘swell of some sweet tune,’ morning gliding into noon, May merging into June.”

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# THE PITY OF IT



## THE PITY OF IT

**I**N "The Wild Ass' Skin" a skeptical character mourns: "Man is always at strife with himself; we have nothing here below in full measure but misfortune." It is the formula of pessimistic thought, often varied in its particular wail, yet betokening the same gruesome view of life, the same complaint of fate, the same unreasoning despair. There is a fine tonic to such morbid philosophy in Charles Lamb's cheery logic: "Away with this vale of tears, there is more life than death in the world—consequently more health than sickness, more happiness than misery." It is indeed pitiful, this jaundice-eyed view of human existence which sees goodness, love and beauty nowhere; suffers the sunlight to be obscured by the shadows of its own personality, and finds no delight, no suggestiveness in the wealth of inspiring incidents and reflections which to a healthy nature are a perpetual joy. To the perverse, melancholy student of the world, the disdain of Schopenhauer, the mockery of Voltaire, the sepulchral gloom of Leopardi, are the expressions of life. "There is no health in

## The Pity of It

us :” we are as flotsam and jetsam tossed upon the billows of eternity, with no aspiration, no pleasurable future, no faith, save that “man is born to sorrow as the sparks to fly upward.”

It is strange indeed that so many members of the community share these tenets of despair, yet one has but to associate freely with fellow men to discover that pessimism is widely diffused, especially among those who, from lack of a liberal understanding, contemplate all things through the mists of ignorance or the murky atmosphere obscured by private disappointment. Even the greatest minds fall a prey to sordid fears and ill omens, finding nothing in the lot of humanity but the ancient “vanity of vanities.” Carlyle’s normal utterance was a dyspeptic growl, and one may believe that only the fawning adulation of a Boswell could extract from that old *ursa major*, Dr. Johnson, aught save an unseemly snarl, or the bellow of the bulls of Bashan. Of somewhat finer strain is Ruskin’s dissent with mankind ; but it is the same splenetic unrest and melancholy, as is evident in “Fors Clavigera.” All

## The Pity of It

re-echo the same lament, and in the closing years even the great and glorious Burke drank of the fatal gall.

To forget personal loss — whether of health, fortune, offspring, or the one love of a lifetime, ay, this is no easy task, and many a noble spirit bows before the storm and heart-break of mortal vicissitude. In seasons of despair, however, the truly noble soul finds no solace in pessimism, but rather in a spiritual philosophy, such as moves us to veneration in Tennyson's "In Memoriam" or Emerson's "Threnody." To wreak upon an innocent world the sorrows and discipline properly pertaining to our own consciousness and experience seems the last resort of little minds. Far manlier and nobler were it to cultivate resignation and trust. Thoreau, whose life, pure and beautiful as it was, partook of lonely sorrows, says inspiringly: "Sometimes our fate becomes too homely and familiarly serious ever to be cruel" — a sublime acquiescence as ever saint professed, from the lips and heart of one who never entered a church! Consider the deeply religious

## The Pity of It

Spanish proverb: "There is no ill that cometh not for good." What an answer to skepticism!

It is a singular fact that the blind—whether the misfortune be congenital or accidental—seldom, if ever, despair. They upon whom is laid the heaviest hand of inscrutable destiny teach us to bear our lot gently and uncomplainingly. "Nothing happens to anyone but what is in his power to endure," says wise Antonius. To assume that all men are miserable because we ourselves are unhappy impugns our own reason. "We have strength enough to bear the ills of others," says LaRochefoucauld. Why not then our own?

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# THE REPOSE OF LITERATURE





## THE REPOSE OF LITERATURE

**B**ALZAC feelingly says: "The tranquillity and peace that a scholar meets is something as sweet and exhilarating as love. Unspeakable joys are showered on us by the exertion of our mental faculties, the quest of ideas, and the tranquil contemplation of knowledge — delights indescribable because purely intellectual and impalpable to our senses." A similar thought is finely expressed by Longfellow:

"The love of learning, the sequestered nooks,  
And all the sweet serenity of books."

And Goethe in "Faust," portrays the student's inmost heart:

"When in my study-chamber nightly  
The friendly lamp begins to burn,  
Then in the bosom thought beams brightly,  
Homeward the heart will then return.  
To peace are lulled life's wild desires,  
The hand of passion lies at rest ;  
The love of God the bosom fires,  
The love of man stirs up the breast."

Only the scholar can adequately comprehend the scholar's quiet ecstasy, as only the violinist can divine the violinist's skill or the artist correctly judge the painter's art.

There is an inexpressible charm in contempla-

## The Repose of Literature

tive thought, blended as it is with the feelings common to mankind—tender almost as love, yet calmer and more entrancing because of its impersonality and the atmosphere of the ideal with which it is suffused. I can readily imagine the tranquil glow which warmed the imagination of Amiel whose "Journal intime" is replete with delicate fancy, reflecting the writer's subtle refinement and gentleness of pure emotion. In closing his record of private feeling one is half conscious of some exquisite perfume, such as the scent of violets or Chilean jasmine. "Solitude," said Landor, "is the audience chamber of God." In the silence of the study's seclusion, in lonely reading and meditation, have the rarest and gentlest, as well as the most gifted, intellects been nurtured and sustained. But of this quiet, meditative world in which the studious recluse dwells, in which Carlyle "nourished his mighty heart," and the highest triumphs of the mind have been attained, the vast majority of men know nothing, for the scholar's labors and aspirations are all his own and sufficient unto themselves.

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**MAGNA CIVITAS, MAGNA  
SOLITUDO**



## MAGNA CIVITAS, MAGNA SOLITUDO

“**A** GREAT city, a great solitude” — yes, terribly true to one who has felt the isolation of metropolitan life—the hurrying feet that bear our fellow-men so far away ; the selfish hearts that have no care for us, save in the light of available aids to private weal ; the sense of loneliness as we realize that we are “homeless amid a thousand homes.” Such indeed might be the feelings of him who stands a stranger amid the throngs that sway and jostle and rush madly on beside him, and such, we are told, the thoughts that moved to tears young Howard Payne as he wandered an Ishmaelite along the streets of laughing Paris. Yes, he whose “Home Sweet Home” was destined to linger in the world’s memory with pathetic affection for the tender-hearted author scarce ever knew a home. There is, in truth, a chilling realization of our insignificance in mingling with city life. The very affluence and nonchalance of this vast congregation of humanity dwarfs individual motives and experience, and we become palpably aware how very trivial is all personal ambition or subjective attainment. The beggar by the curb-stone becomes transfigured before us — are we not too desirous of human sympathy, craving a look of kindly recognition ?

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## Magna Civitas, Magna Solitudo

Yet from another point of view, there is no inspiration in the affairs of life so keenly grateful as that awakened by the immense concourse of city breadwinners to whom we accord glad allegiance. We recognize the civilized serfdom which too often shrouds in hopeless gloom the world of business and the gospel of the till. Pinched faces greet us everywhere; there are lines of care and sorrow and of bitter struggle against fate that chill us as we gaze, and make us wonder that mortal lot can be so hard beneath the golden light of God's morning. Yet we too share the burden and the toil, we too sigh for freedom, and the assuaging conviction is brought tenderly home to us that "they are our brothers."

# THE LESSON OF NATURE





## THE LESSON OF NATURE

**T**HERE can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of Nature and has his senses still."

The out-of-door life; the songs of birds; the beauty of brook, meadow, forest and sky should be a complete accompaniment to man's perfect happiness.

There is an indescribable innocence and beneficence in Nature. It has such sympathy with mankind. It is loyal, it is true, and its sympathy, kindness, loyalty, and truth all tend to favorably influence character.

There is so much sham in life, particularly in city life, sham flowers, sham foods, sham medicines, sham ways of administering them, sham love, and worst of all, sham men and women. I am not decrying men and women generally — not at all, for I think that this is a good world with thousands of grand good men in it, fully as good as any extravagant optimist would have it, and never so bad as the pessimist says to himself in his best moods, but I only cry shame that any sham should be where are so many real things, real hearts, souls, lives, responsibilities. We have no time for insincerity toward ourselves or anybody else.

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## The Lesson of Nature

I know we would do very differently if we were alone in the world — we would not smile here and look solemn there. Nature showed her heart, smiled and sent flowers and sun when hundreds of our brave boys had felt the shock of the Spanish Mauser and were dying in the trenches before Santiago ; turned tearful during the Peace Jubilee or when the Nation celebrates the anniversary of its independence. She is what the cause behind actuates, as true as symptom is to disease, but we feel one way and show another.

I know that we are influenced by our fellow-men, and ought to be. But it is not right to be thwarted, stunted, — completely covered up. I think the plants show us a good way to take what our fellows have to give. The former never lose their characteristics, though they get all they have from certain unchanging ingredients supplied them. Lily — lily still ; Anemone — anemone still, though air, water, sun are given them both alike. And so our great men have stood among men, learning in their schools, at their feet, yet standing alone, men.

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# MENTAL JAUNDICE



# MENTAL JAUNDICE

Life is too short to waste  
In critic peep or cynic bark,  
Quarrel or reprimand ;  
'Twill soon be dark ;  
Up ! mind thine own aim, and  
God speed the mark !

— *Emerson.*

**O**F all mental states that of chronic or acute hypercriticism seems the dreariest imaginable. The higher faculties of the mind are choked amid the weeds of querulous discontent ; the conviction of alien shortcomings blinds us to our own, and the whole nature is warped by the reaction of captious faultfinding. Helmholtz averred that if the human eye were presented to him as a perfect mechanism he should consider it a clumsy piece of work. Yet, though few eyes are absolutely free from astigmatism, we are quite content as philosophers to bear the defect with equanimity — indeed, we are resigned to almost any condition short of total blindness.

There are souls so cramped as to be incapacitated from taking the big view of men and things. The music is grand and sweet — but one paltry *F* sharp was a trifle flat ; the picture is truly beautiful — but then what an ugly frame ! the verse is melodious

## Mental Jaundice

and inspiring—but there is one faulty rhyme. This carping habit grows with indulgence, and, in the inexorable pursuit of flaws, we insensibly lose our capacity for the highest enjoyment. Shakespeare is noble, but consider the anachronisms and strange slips of worldly knowledge here and there. The poet Campbell well answered the critics of “As You Like It”, saying: “Away with your best-proved improbabilities when the heart has been touched and fancy fascinated.” Literature, seen at its best, abounds in microscopic errors. Shall we for this reason forego the larger, more rational view? He was a wise poet, the late Frederick G. Tuckerman, the friend of Tennyson, who once printed a clever parody of his own sonnet when stung by some petty critic—after which his enemies found their occupation clean gone.

Better accept the True, the Beautiful, and the Good with the wholesome receptivity born of inherent gratitude. The sunbeam swarms with motes, yet its golden light is none the less genial and inspiring.

# **CHILDHOOD'S REALM**





## CHILDHOOD'S REALM

**F**EW of us thoroughly realize and appreciate the royal domain wherein children reign supreme. The cares and distractions of maturer life are wont to dim, if not obliterate, the halcyon period of childhood, when we dwelt in a world of fancy, believing in fairy tales and Santa Claus ; when tears and laughter went hand in hand, like twin companions, and sleep and play were alike sweet and refreshing. These were the days when bread and molasses or raspberry jam seemed ambrosia to our eager imagination, and mud-pies veritable creations of art. All was fascination and delight and the world we explored entrancing as Aladdin's cave. The freshness and fragrance of childhood's years — beautiful as an unfolding flower — still haunt our retrospective thoughts, like visions too intangible to be grasped by mortal yearning. We would go back to our happy dreamland and breathe again the elixir of youthful joys. Alas, the disenchantments of adolescence grow sterner and more persistent with advancing years. We are chained to the world of politics and trade, and oftentimes the struggle for existence, contrasted with the ecstatic morning of life, appears the irony of human aspiration.

## Childhood's Realm

Yet here, everywhere around us, is revived in the glad faces of children the irrevocable delight we can no longer claim for ourselves, and we are still permitted to enter into their buoyant presence, to share at least the joys of love and innocence, and tread the enchanted ground. To kith and kin, indeed, belongs a sacred and special privilege; yet it is not, as in maturer years, exclusive, for the beauty and essence of child life lie in its universal instincts and feelings. Even names and ages seem of minor import compared with the tender assurance of trust expressed in the touch of a confiding palm, a look of questioning devotion, or the murmur of childish prattle.

We are enabled to enter heartily into the thoughts and emotions of the young partly through kindred feelings, partly through a large and sympathetic perception. As indications of dawning character, few children fail to reward study. In this sense, the street urchin, trailing an empty sardine-box, or venting his exuberant energies upon a battered tomato-can, becomes as interesting a personality to the lover of childhood as the apparently more favored possessor of a gilded chariot or of the most exacting paraphernalia of orthodox "Rugby." In

## Childhood's Realm

fact, the frowsiest gutter-snipe may present to the thoughtful observer a subject of instructive analysis. He is not to be cajoled — save through a very tangible appeal to his cupidity ; his appearance and manners preclude all thought of caresses, and he must be consigned to the category of those whom Charles Lamb irreverently termed “brats.” Yet he glories in a vigorous individuality, observes the world keenly, if defiantly, and not infrequently possesses salient qualities of mind and heart that compel admiration. The wonder is that the good in him has survived the withering shock of his environment.

What a relief to turn from the sordid and belittling influences which often mark our commercial or political life, the oppressive hollowness and too frequent artificiality of social amenities or the wretched subterfuges which strangle true and wholesome relations — what a relief it is to turn to the clear, guileless sincerity of childhood ! Blessed be the fall of infant feet and sound of gentle voices that make music for us in a world of discord — the calm, limpid eyes that look into our own and humble us with their cherubic glance, the sweet, ineffable trust and affection that render life forever worth living, and crown this festal season with perennial joy !



# **NO SENTIMENT IN BUSINESS**



## NO SENTIMENT IN BUSINESS

**I** CALLED on a noted Chicago business firm not very long ago, to urge them to re-employ a man who had been of invaluable service to them, but who had not been paid half what he was worth, and in a despondent moment got drunk and was discharged.

In reply to my urgent appeal a member of the firm said to me with some annoyance as he turned from his desk: "Doctor, you should know that there can be no sentiment in business. Let him go to hell. We're not in the reforming business and I'd advise you to let him alone and abandon that kind of work."

With all my friend's weakness, I have more respect for him than for that cold-blooded business man, who perhaps if he were unmasked would show a soul as full of cruel selfishness, impurities and secret vices as ever Dante portrayed in his *Inferno*.

What was it to him that a sensitive human being in a moment of weakness had drifted into dangerous waters, where the devil lay in wait to drag him down to the bottomless pit? Stone him; push him in farther! or turn your back and "let him go to hell" — for that's business. Let a man or a woman but once start down the toboggan slide of life and



## No Sentiment in Business

there are plenty of people who will lean over with clubs to swipe him as he goes past. It is nothing to them that by heredity, the want of a mother's care and a father's training, or evil associates, he was caused to fall. No matter if with the agony of a lost soul, he cries to you for help, and with bleeding fingers he snatches at anything in the hope of checking his downward course, hit him again! for how dare he have the audacity to ask for honest work and try to be a man when he has once yielded to temptation.

Not only the unsympathetic, uncharitable business men, but—God pity us—many so-called Christian men and women are only too glad to feed on another's reputation, and unveil the record of his past life.

You contemptible hyenas of society, you will be in great luck if, when you attempt to land on the eternity side of Jordan, you are not pushed back like drowning rats by the very beings you have failed to help.

It would be better if there were more sentiment in business, and in life generally. We can only measure an action by the depth of the sentiment from which it proceeds.

## No Sentiment in Business

Those of you who are not in the "reforming business", and pride yourselves on your strength and reputation, better take a day off occasionally and read and ponder over the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians and may God help you to profit by what you read.

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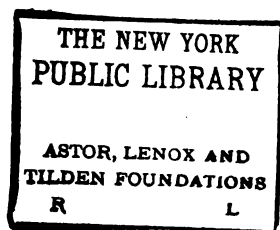


*VICTORY*





BY PERMISSION OF W. W. DENSLOW



# VICTORY





# VICTORY

Thou simulacrum of celestial power —  
A lying, leering, loathesome mockery —  
Contrast thy mein with that of stately Pallas,  
Sprung from the head of Zeus, symbol divine,  
Star-bright and girt with wisdom and ordained  
The goddess tutelary of high Athens. Where,  
In thy poor guise, thy travesty of might,  
Bereft of all that graces God-like thought,  
Shall we discern imperishable strength,  
Thou pitiable image of divinity,  
Earth-born, and in thy earthiness complete ?  
Yet Victory thou would's't typify ! Pray, tell me, then  
What triumphs thou would's't here commemorate —  
The greatness of brute strength ; the blighting scourge  
That human nobleness hath crushed ; the deadly task  
That oft hath rendered earth a charnel-house,  
Dim'st with hot tears the brightest eyes that shone,  
And orphaned millions ? Take thy crafty way  
Amid the sombre sepulchres of time ;  
Gloat o'er the ruins of proud dynasties,  
And sate thyself with mortal fury : Yet  
Know that thy empire is ephemeral  
As the wild storm that rends the earth asunder,  
A momentary scourge.

Thou dost not speak :

Thy thoughts are sealed forever ; be it so,  
Grim satirist of earth ! that even in tears  
And depth of sorrow still is beautiful.  
Yes, even the lowliest weed reflects the smile  
Of a benignant, overmastering Love ;  
The sunrise beams and sheltering stars look down  
Upon man's fate. All is not lost ! The heart  
Still beats, and kindlier motives stir

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## Victory

The breast of great Prometheus. Thou alone  
The sable shadow of thy gloom must cast  
Upon our hope. Futile and gross endeavor !  
From haunting dreams and fears unutterable  
The spirit in its heavenly might shall rise ;  
Brushing aside the shrouding vapors, till  
O'er the new morn chimes of sweet peace shall peal,  
A brighter glory tinge the path we tread,  
And tenderer longings cheer the solitude  
Amid whose shade 'tis mortal lot to dwell.

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# OURSELVES AND OTHERS



## OURSELVES AND OTHERS

**W**HOSO respects and esteems himself inspires respect in others, and if that self-esteem be offset by modesty, he shall find the reflection to lack no coloring. If God helps him who helps himself, as the proverb goes, man respects him who respects himself. But the delicate art is in the projection and withdrawal of self, not only to give pleasure, but to save offense. There are those who would have their friends serve as but outriders to their fame, and who override any company as some politicians do a caucus. They go forth only to conquest, and though they may gain subjects they do not multiply friends. Happy is the man who in conversation or any associate work can offer much; but doubly happy if he can draw forth much from others. It is well to let your light shine, but not to dazzle, the eyes of the beholders, nor to obscure lesser lights. If a man would be well thought of he cannot do better than to assist others to think well of themselves, by drawing from men noble opinions and inciting them to superior attainments.

Most men have an abundance of exalted thoughts, if only they can be quickened to the expression of them. The birth is hard and must

## Ourselfs and Others

needs be assisted. The power of thought is not so rare, but the faculty of formulating thought is rare, being akin to inspiration. It is a great thing to think; a happy thing to be able to speak intelligently; a grand achievement to put our thoughts and words into action. We are all of us, from the lowliest to the most exalted, pleased to find our opinions approved, if the approval be not insincere and formal. If approbation brings with it some reason as proof of good faith we are content and incited to greater efforts. Unless a man or a woman is strong indeed in faith, lack of approval and appreciation stunts and warps self-esteem; when self-esteem is gone it makes little difference whether it is a revolver or some respectable disease that terminates existence.

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# **A BOUNTEOUS GIVER**





## A BOUNTEOUS GIVER

**W**HERE shall we find the fairest symbol of generosity? Perhaps in the rose, which sheds its fragrance on every side, regardless of environment or man's desert, offering its delicate perfume to all the world alike; so that a thousand persons may enjoy the scent without impairing the pleasure of a thousand others. Man's largess is more or less limited, by temperament, inclination, and circumstance. The rose is never tired of giving, inviting participation in its inexhaustible store of treasured delight. Its beauty and kindness seem almost animate, without thought of self or recompense. Alas, that nature should excel mortality—the crown of created things!

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# **THE GOSPEL OF WORK**



## THE GOSPEL OF WORK

**H**UMBOLDT observed that "the noblest characteristic of man is his capacity for work." The illustrious savant might well commend labor to his fellow-men, seeing that his long life was devoted to unremitting toil. But what shall we call work? It is certain that one man's labor is another's play, and in congenial occupation we forget fatigue and energies expended, being sustained by the sovereign tonic, enthusiasm. "Who labors, prays," says the ancient apothegm. Yet, as Hawthorne remarked, mere manual labor may become brutalizing, as is well illustrated in a terrible page of La Bruyère and in Jean Francois Millet's chilling picture "The Man with the Hoe", where the peasant, leaning on his mattock, gazes, open-mouthed, blank, and hopelessly stolid as the clod beneath his feet, an awful commentary on the peasant's daily toil. Contrast with this Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra :"

    "Not on the vulgar mass  
    Called "work" must sentence pass —  
Things done that took the eye and had their price ;  
    O'er which from level stand  
    The low world laid its hand.  
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice :

## The Gospel of Work

But all the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the man's account —  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount :

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped,  
All I could never be,  
All men ignored in me,  
That I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitchers shaped."

Thoreau, who labored faithfully in his profession of land-surveyor, and who was never idle, dared to say that it would be well for all men could they but pause now and then and, lying on a sunny bank-side, surrender themselves to meditation. What would he have thought of the indefatigable housewife who standing in a lovely pine grove only sighed at the "untidiness" around her and wished she had a broom !

There is little or no repose in American character. We are constantly burning the candle at both ends in our pursuit of wealth, political advancement or social position. Colonial times seem placid and thoughtful, as indeed they were, contrasted

## The Gospel of Work

with the feverish struggles and anxieties of today ; yet, strangely enough, the acquisition of wealth, or the attainment of pecuniary independence, is not attended by a proportionate amount of the happiness which Herbert Spencer declares to be a perfectly normal and legitimate object of existence.

I recall the case of a merchant who, having gained a handsome competency in trade, retired from business and devoted the remainder of his days to his family. Such instances are rare, however, the vast majority of mercantile men preferring the harness and its ever-increasing emoluments. So strong in them has become the force of habit that they could find no contentment in rest and contemplation. Man invented the sewing-machine that woman might be relieved of excessive toil, find leisure to cultivate her mind and dedicate peaceful days to the love and welfare of her children. Straightway she defeats the very object of that chivalrous solicitude ; arrays herself in a bewildering, albeit captivating, maze of tucks and frills and furbelows ; is no better educated than her grandmother, and if she consents to be bored with children at all, leaves them with the nurse and scurries away to the nearest "convocation" to venti-



## The Gospel of Work

late her intuitions concerning woman suffrage and flounder in the measureless sea of "reform."

Nothing is more unphilosophical, nor does greater violence to truth, than the average criterion of work. To an unreasoning laity, for example, the doctor's visit often appears in the light of an agreeable interview, and the few words spoken regarding the ailment, or a prescription distinguished chiefly by its brevity, are wholly dissociate from any conception of toil, not to speak of the absurdity of an equitable fee. Let the layman look back to the years of labor that have produced the knowledge which may have spared his life: the banishment from home and friends, perhaps; the long privations and solitary zeal, and the patient struggle with poverty and oblivion ere the physician's skill and status were attained.

The farmer, knowing only the toil circumscribed by his limited acres and the husbandman's cares, is wont to be impatient with learning and professional acquirements. How well is he answered in Emerson's lyric, "The Apology :"

"Chide me not, laborious band,  
For the idle flowers I brought ;  
Every aster in my hand  
Goes home loaded with a thought.

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# The Gospel of Work

One harvest from thy field  
Homeward brought the oxen strong ;  
A second crop thine acres yield  
Which I gather in a song."

So with the mechanic, the artisan, and the multitude of "laboring men". It is difficult for them to understand the true and ample significance of work, and the proletariat echoes their disdain, itself creating the class distinctions it blindly deprecates. The "horny-handed son of toil" would scoff at the thought of the late Mr. Gould, of Wall street, as a worker ; yet probably no man in America labored so untiringly as that redoubtable wizard, although his efforts can scarcely be associated with prayer.

Yet, when all is said respecting the latitude to be given to the term, there is work which, in its stultifying tendency, its grinding thralldom, and demoralizing influence may well be regarded with pitying awe, almost reverence. Who knows the secret history of the "sweat shop," notwithstanding occasional newspaper revelations, and a feeble surveillance of the law ?

Who can estimate the misery and degradation of certain coal regions, where every moment is a life-

## The Gospel of Work

time and the spur of necessity is pitiless as fate? The Italian peasant basking in kindly sunlight, revels in the "sweet do-nothing" of an almost animal existence. A little red wine, a hard biscuit, or a bowl of mush satisfies his needs—he sings, and is happy. What of the workers in iron mills, the stokers on our "ocean greyhounds," the thousands of laborers everywhere whose lives of incessant toil leave no trace of happiness behind them? Surely there must be some redress for them hereafter. They did not create their withering environment, nor were Pandora's gifts ever offered to their choice.

Looking at the subject philosophically, we must accept the dictum of Humboldt. "Given a man's toil, be it congenial or distasteful, he can display no finer energy than in accomplishing his task as perfectly as talent and conscience will permit." Though he be "unapt to toil and trouble in the world," there is in labor a satisfaction deeper than idleness and luxury can afford. "Fie upon this quiet life, I want work"! This, as a rule, is the stimulus to man's noblest endeavor and the incentive to his highest achievement. It matters little

## The Gospel of Work

what the labor may be. Even the poet toils—think of it! “Hours of Idleness,” Byron’s first volume of poems, was published in 1807. Byron died in 1824, and in that brief period of creative power all those marvelous compositions were produced. In twenty-one days Handel completed the choral parts and instrumental score of the great “Messiah.” Poet and musician were alike kindled by the fire of genius, yet imagine the toil! “By working like a horse, sir,” was the reply of a distinguished artist to one who inquired how he had attained his skill. In America, at least, where more or less equal conditions prevail, there can be no cessation of labor, save for the privileged few, and he who abstains from honest toil will inevitably find rust, not rest.

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# THE VALUE OF DOUBT



## THE VALUE OF DOUBT

NOTHING is certain save uncertainty," cries the skeptic, and François Arago dared maintain that "nothing is positively certain outside the region of pure mathematics." It is hard at times to gainsay the latter dictum. We cannot conceive that omnipotence should prove that two and two make five. The philosophical query arises whether man, whose whole *raison d'être*, from birth to death, is shrouded in mystery, would be happier were he capable of solving the problems inseparable from human existence. Certainties are often more perplexing, more sorrowful, than doubt. The possibilities in man are sternly conditioned by his environment. The limitations of his intellectual power are obvious, so far as they relate to the unknowable, and it seems idle to lament the denial of capacities which appear wholly beyond the scope of mortal destiny. What if we do not, nor ever can, know? We can feel, and in that feeling derive happiness from what is loving and beautiful around us. Dreams are not prophecies; yet in imaginative thought there is solace for earthly ills, and but for the faculty of imagination, the assurance of uncertainty, life would be but a dull, hopeless vacuity.

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**LIFT THINE EYES**



*LIFT THINE EYES*





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## LIFT THINE EYES

**I**T has been observed of man, *par excellence*, that he is the only animal which looks heavenward. It would seem that a vast majority of the human species confines its attention strictly to the earth. The thought is suggested by the almost universal ignorance of cloud and sunset phenomena, recurring constantly, yet wholly ignored. There is no city prison whose walls are so confined as to preclude the beauty of the heavens. As a rule, the glorious spectacle afforded by the scenery of cloud-land is presented for our contemplation during nearly the entire year; the absorbing passion for mundane affairs, however, renders us wholly insensible to the majesty and loveliness of supernal panoramas which infinitely surpass the highest conception of the beautiful possible to man. Even his glowing canvas can but faintly reproduce in fixity of form the ever-changing glory of a September sunset—an instant's impression which mobile nature accords, but which to her is only the slightest phase of her unfolding splendor. "Lift thine eyes" to yonder procession of afternoon clouds, towering in luminous masses above the eastern horizon, flecking the azure spaces with soft islets of swaying mist, lying in steel-blue folds over the green woodlands and again



## Lift Thine Eyes

mounting to the zenith, tinged with delicate rose-color or shading into pearl-gray, never for a moment at rest, assuming the most fantastic shapes, yet ever beautiful — who would grovel over earth always with all this radiance above him? Close thy Ruskin and Shelley, and behold !

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# REVERIES OF DECEMBER



## REVERIES OF DECEMBER

**D**ECEMBER is the month which should stimulate your faith in mankind. It is the month of melancholy days and of joyous hopes. It is the month of pitiless introspection and of noble resolutions. How keenly you remember the discords of your past life, but with the melody of the Christmas song harmony abides and your soul responds to the sentiment.

“With malice towards none, with charity for all.”

The year has nearly gone. Have you done your best? If not it is useless to repine. Neither regrets nor remorse can undo the past. The old year has passed its feverish solstice and you inhale the odor of the new.

The frail bridge of time on which you trod has sunk into eternity. The harvest of the year has been gathered in and garnered. The events of the past twelve months rush through your memory in great whirls of thought. You listen again with thirsty ear to the delicious melody of a voice that is no more, and as you look at the frozen earth that lies so heavily on that tender heart you loved so well, there comes to you the faint echoing sob of a long good-bye.

Despite the shining acts of benevolence and love

## Reveries of December

credited to you, there are sorrowful recollections of unkind words, wrong deeds, and enmities unforgiven, and you turn with dim and shadowy eyes from the regrets of the past to the New Year with a stronger heart and a purer, clearer purpose. You resolve that hatred and malice shall be sacrificed upon the altar of love and charity.

The music of childish voices, coming from the depths of mistletoe and holly sets your soul aflame with generous fire.

You know that throughout our land, in rural districts and city slums; in the abodes of poverty and opulence, and in the sacred precincts of a thousand Christian churches, the sunlight of Christmastide shines with ennobling benevolence. And you know full well that it is this philanthropic ardor which comes to bless the evil and the good, the rich and the poor, that stimulates our faith in the goodness of mankind, and vindicates our inherent capacity for the higher, more unselfish motives that redeem life's sombre history.

So to-night, though the clouds hang darkly against a despondent sky, if you will but look upward steadily, hopefully, you will see the light of the everlasting stars which will brighten the New

## Reveries of December

Year, and lead you on into the full radiance of everlasting day. And if you will listen, you will hear blending with the rhythm of the Christmas bells the grand refrain, echoing in reverberant joy down two thousand years,

“Peace on earth, good will toward men.”

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# **A HEART'S TRIBUTE**





## A HEART'S TRIBUTE

**D**R. OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES somewhere quotes a New England epitaph which reads : "She was so pleasant."

What a world of feeling and honor lies in this eloquent testimonial ! No fulsome eulogy of ordinary virtues or the graces of saintliness — only the simple tribute to a sweetness of character which made her wifely presence a perpetual ray of sunshine in the household and crowned her days with endearing charm. One can readily imagine that to so gentle a nature the pressure of domestic duties should never be irksome, but that every detail of the menage would assume loving interest and the husband's homecoming bring to the hearthstone renewed light and joy.

Such an one fulfills in the highest, noblest sense the ideal sphere of womanhood (*wife of man*). For him who bears before the world and society the grave responsibility implied in the term *pater familias*, there can be no thought so comforting, no experience so inspiring as the loving smile which greets him everywhere and upon all occasions on the part of his helpmate. For her, he may well incur every privation, brave every vicissitude of earth and deem himself fortunate in living. She wields an

## A Heart's Tribute

influence not blazoned before the world, yet none the less potent in her quiet sphere. There is a sense of cheerfulness in her speech and ways which one would find it difficult perhaps to define, but whose spell is inwoven in the shining hours and lingers in memory like a delicious fragrance. Before her the ordinary foibles of men are sweetly rebuked and manners acquire a gentility and grace which are the heart's best testimonial to her worth. Yet should her benignant sway be suddenly withdrawn from us, we might find it hard to analyze the charm epitomizing all her womanly impress in the thought, "She was so pleasant."

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# PRECIOUS LETTERS



## PRECIOUS LETTERS

**B**EGINNING the New Year you make new resolutions and sort over old letters and papers. Tucked away back in a deep drawer of your desk you take out a little tin box and unlock it, disclosing three bundles of letters lying side by side. You are prompted to open the box because at the close of the year you received a letter which was the final act of the one sweet tragic romance of your life. You read a portion of the letter again. Yes, these are the words, there can be no mistake: "I ask you, for the sake of the past, for the sake of the love that you know was as true and unselfish as Heaven itself, for the sake of the unforgettable, to return my letters."

Though you have treasured them jealously, you say to yourself as you take them tenderly from the box and read again those loving words you have read so many times: "Yes Dear, I loved you too well to refuse, though you may have doubted me, and failed to understand, I loved you — Oh! just because, because it was you — *you!*" And then you lock the door of your "den", poke up the fire in your grate, and read each one, full of the tragic outpourings of her love. From within several closely written sheets, a lock of hair is suddenly released

## Precious Letters

entwining itself about your trembling fingers, and your heart contracts painfully. Again you inhale the fragrance of her lustrous tresses, and feel the warmth of her pleading lips. In your imagination you once more hold her close to your beating heart while the sweet hours slip by without knowledge. And then you feel again the mist of sorrow in your eyes as you bade her a long good bye.

She has gone now, married perhaps, or soon to be, and you question if you shall ever look into her eyes again, which held in their depths so much shadow and light, love and pain, and you turn once more to her letters wondering, if, after all, you understood. You read on and live over again that delicious dreamy past. Her fingers were on your heart-strings then and it seemed as if you could not part from her. That was so long ago! Then the letters came and went, breathing the unutterable sweetness of two passionate loving hearts. You are startled at the waking of these sweet memories feeling again the ecstatic touch of hand and lips that thrilled body and soul as never before—nor since. But one day came a message which darkened the face of the earth making your life dull and commonplace, and strangling your heart with the clutch of a

## Precious Letters

disappointed love. Ah, here it is! "I hate to hurt you, but you are wrong when you think I am anything more than a friend." You read no more, for the memory of the bitter tears shed is too vivid. They fell very heavily on your heart then and mingled badly with your love. You went about your work but with an indescribable pathos and weariness. You doubt even now if the wound which caused you such cruel throbs of agony is fully healed. With a sigh you bundle up all her letters securely and address them, with the certainty confronting you that one romance at least, in your life is finished.

With a sense of relief you take out another package and read each letter. They are signed "Your loving mother." Nothing in *them* to cause you pain. She never failed to understand nor were you disappointed in her love. You say with "Ik Marvel": "What gentle admonition; — what tender affection! God have mercy on him who outlives the tears that such admonitions, and such affection call up to the eye!"

The writer of these dear letters is gone also, but you are not asked to return them. They are yours, to comfort you when your heart is faint with life's



## Precious Letters

struggle, and you are sick of the deceit and selfishness of mankind.

The world with its whirl and riot, the cheers of your friends and the curses of your enemies cannot deafen the sweet counsels of that devoted mother that to-night come surging up through the channels of your memory. And so you reverently lay those precious missives back in the box, and take out the only remaining package.

The fire in the grate burns steadily now, not too fervent, but with a cheering soothing warmth. You feel sure it will not go out, so you let the package rest in your lap unopened, and allow your mind to wander back over the past.

You see the dark shadows alternating with brilliant beams of crimson and gold upon your life. Far down in your heart the delicious strains of an old love steal with witching melody upon your ear, while the dismally whistling wind outside reminds you of the melancholy days when your soul was stirred to its very depths. It was then that the writer of the unopened package came into your life. She came with comfort in her breast and was a kindly listener. She became the altar of your confidence, and you knew that by her at least you were

## Precious Letters

beloved and understood; that she would forgive your errors and weaknesses; that to her you might unburden your soul fearless of harsh, unsympathizing ears.

Opening one of her letters you read. You miss the passionate utterances of the first love, but the words are calm and pure and deep, and while you do not feel the thrill and ecstasy occasioned by the first, you experience when reading this a peace and certainty "that passeth understanding." The impassioned yearnings of her heart are not fully divulged until you read a letter signed "Always Your Devoted Wife." Then you ask yourself if you are not unworthy of such trust and sublime devotion. You have suffered, God knows, but she loves you better because of what you have endured. She is the light of your life and you love her more than you have been able to tell her, and you say to yourself: "'It is sombre grey, this web of Life, but it becomes silver when the light shines upon it, and in the sun it glows with rainbow hues. A broken, distorted web is beautiful then, and mine is broken in many places, though I have spun as best I may. My love for you, dear wife, is the light upon my web, and ill-shapen and shattered though it is, there lies within its meshes a human heart.'"



# **THE BLENDING OF THE STREAMS**



## THE BLENDING OF THE STREAMS

ONCE upon a time two limpid streams issued from a mountain side, and, pursuing different courses, traversed a lovely woodland, where through the peaceful days they were charmed by the singing of birds and the coming on of Spring.

As they flowed, gathering strength in their progress, they ever and anon found fresh surprises, unknown nooks of sky, and light and shade, while each reflected the blue of heaven, and chanted the mystic melody which only the wood-gods understood.

The banks were radiant with fragrant blossoms, tender as the flesh of babes, that bent to kiss the water's marge, shedding a delicious perfume through the dreamy air.

Down the silent slopes, steeped in green, the brooks, pure and blue as the blue of a young girl's eyes, flowed merrily on.

Now the copses rehearsed their murmurous litany. Stately pines whispered in sweet cadences, while everywhere there breathed the spirit of vast purity. Occasionally a delicate tracery of vines concealed the woodland depths, within which mask of variegated hue the fairies reveled, and now and

## The Blending of the Streams

then, strange faint echoes came to them, suggesting notes of earth, yet in their melody divine.

The waters grew apace and throbbed with a new sensation, seeming enraptured with the fragrance, and the music, and the miracle of loveliness about them.

At length when every flower was flaunting itself in the fiery face of morn, and down through the softly whispering foliage a thousand streams of filtered sunshine glistened on the bosoms of the waters, they ran timidly but irresistibly toward one another, as if to some perilous happiness.

Tarrying a moment in curving bays, and then breaking into merry laughter as they rippled over pebbly bottoms, they rushed on until with one passionate bound they sprang together, mingling and blending into a dumb delightful oneness.

The mighty stream paused a moment, and was still, trembling in a thrill of voluptuous silence. Then quivering in an ecstasy of happiness it flowed on, into the Valley of Experience. All about was an atmosphere of love and sweet music while amorous blossoms bathed their crimson faces in the water.

The stream then broke into a burst of glorious

## The Blending of the Streams

melody, and flowed on and on, now joyfully kissing the sunlit banks, now calming itself into sudden quietness as it passed into the sombre shade of some odorous thicket.

At last it wound its way into a miasmatic marsh, in which fainting flowers drooped with feverish odor. Stagnant pools lay listless in the sun, while fiery poppies peered with bloodshot eyes into the still waters. Half-dead trees rotten and impotent with age flung their shadows upon the stream.

The day waned into an atmosphere of satiety which seemed to encompass the earth. The plants shrunk into themselves and separated one from another as they sank to sleep.

Onward into the stifling night crept the apathetic stream. Withered weeds floated in the river like the hair of a drowned woman, and the dank earth exhaled an odor like a paralytic. The clouds grew inky black. The air became filled with motion. The trees swayed and cracked and dipped their branches into the melancholy stream. The wind moaned and shrieked and sucked up great quantities of water dashing it upon the storm-swept earth.

Soon the river was a seething mass of foam, hurling itself from bank to bank as if struggling to



## The Blending of the Streams

escape. Tearing, roaring, on into the howling blackness it dashed furiously on to a rocky promontory that stood grim and relentless in its path.

With a wail that echoed above the din of rebellious nature the stream tore itself apart, flowing in opposite directions into the unknown darkness.

The storm gradually subsided, but all Nature sounded a *miserere*. Grey with grief the streams flowed, wrinkled and wan, into the sombre silence and entered the frigid sternness of Winter. Yet they had met and become a part of each other, and though for a space the world was filled with grayness, and the fragrance, and the music, and the loveliness of earth were cold and unresponsive, Nature kissed them into warmth again and the waters once more merged into one united stream. Its placid bosom gave no sign of its unfathomed depths and no hint of its weary wanderings, but its quiet surface covered many a tragedy and its noiseless flow drowned many a tear. But as it flowed peacefully on toward the Ocean of Eternity, it said: "Our love has bloomed again, into an eternal Spring."

And all Nature broke into a rhapsody of triumphant music.

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